

For the Record

Straight talk about antibiotic use in food animal production presented by ALPHARMA Inc., Animal Health

THE REAL CONSEQUENCES OF A THEORETICAL LAW

As in every congressional session since 1999, bills were introduced in February that would **effectively end nearly all uses** of important low-level livestock antibiotics. Proponents point to theoretical risk that using those drugs may cause human drugs to fail if bacteria in people grow resistant to them—a theory not proven by science during the four decades it's been repeated. In return for that theoretical risk reduction, the bill's supporters would risk several demonstrable consequences:

ANIMAL SUFFERING would increase. When European legislators **enacted a similar ban**—ignoring the advice of scientists there—the incidence of animal disease and the amount of medically important antibiotics needed to treat that disease increased.

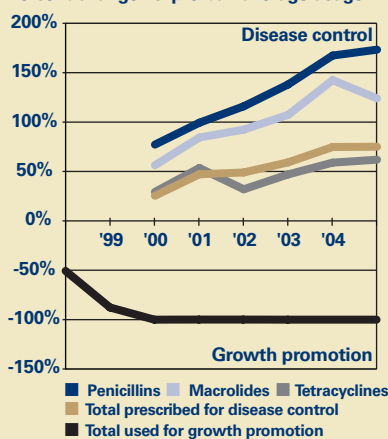
FOOD WOULD BE LESS SAFE. Antibiotics used at low levels improve the health of animals, thus they enter the food chain carrying lower levels of bacteria that are potential contaminants. The Institute of Food Technologists warns that **making draconian changes** in such food-protection technology risks an increase—not decrease—in cases of food-borne illness.

FOOD WOULD COST MORE—now and in the future. A **National Research Council** study estimated banning low-level antibiotic use in all meat production, adjusted for inflation to today's dollars, could cost food consumers an extra \$1.3 to \$2.9 billion per year. The study added, though, that future costs of a ban would be higher, for two reasons. First, it would create a climate of regulatory uncertainty that would scare companies away from investing in new technologies. Second, any ban likely wouldn't stop at "low-level" antibiotics. Continuing restrictions on all animal antibiotics would increase their cost, reduce their use by farmers and increase animal disease.

Unintended consequence in action

As low-level antibiotic use in Denmark disappeared after 1999, the **resulting jump in animal disease** forced vets to resort to higher use of "medically important" antibiotics to treat sick animals. The ban actually exacerbated the alleged problem these politicians were trying to fix. As a result, Denmark instituted even stricter controls in 2005, including audits of veterinarians whose antibiotic use is deemed too high.

Danish food-animal antibiotic use
Percent change vs. pre-ban average usage



Source: Danish Integrated Antimicrobial Resistance Monitoring and Research Programme, July 2006.

SMALL U.S. FARMERS WILL SUFFER

most. Because they would be less able to absorb the costs, improve buildings, increase veterinary visits and otherwise compensate for lost **efficiency antibiotics help provide**, small farmers would be the first driven out of business. And as biofuels-inflated corn prices continue to increase their feed costs, U.S. farmers will be made less competitive with international producers overall, as well.

Speak up

U.S. representatives and senators need to hear from constituents who will support them in defending your ability to apply safe, effective technology like antibiotics to food production. For a link to locate and contact your representatives, go to the new www.AntibioticTruths.com. When discussing the issue, ask your representative to oppose H.R. 962; your senators, S. 549.

Antibiotics prevent disease and improve meat, milk and egg production. These important, safe and proven tools remain absolutely necessary to meet the world's growing demand for affordable protein. ALPHARMA Inc., Animal Health sponsors this educational series to provide facts to help set the record straight. Comments or questions? **E-mail Steve Kopperud** at skopperud@poldir.com or **editor Mike Smith** at CustomMedia@Food360.com. **To read past issues**, see www.AntibioticTruths.com